



# HOUGHTON UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT

*Excellence for the Glory of God*

*Saturday, May 9, 2026*

John & Charles Wesley Chapel

# COMMENCEMENT 2026

## Processional

Processional in D  
Processional in D

Judy Congdon, organ

Samuel Porter  
David Johnson

## Welcome

Wayne D. Lewis, Jr.  
*President*

## Invocation

Karey (Derr '98) Killian  
*Parent of Graduate*

## Musical Selection

Aria

Sarah Hoppough '26, alto saxophone  
Rachel Huchthausen '23, '26 (M.M., M.A.), piano

Eugène Bozza

## Bestowing Houghton Medal and Honorary Degrees

Johanna Chacón Rugh, Houghton Medal  
Paul Young '76, Houghton Medal  
David Cram, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*  
Robert Danner, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*

## Commencement Address

“God is at Work: Turning Everyday Places into Kingdom Spaces”

Carrie Whitcher

## Presentation of Class Gift

Samuel Figard '26

## Presentation of Degrees

Jill (Brautigam '99) Jordan  
*Interim Provost*

## Benediction

Ryann Cooley  
*Parent of Graduate*

## Recessional

Toccata from Symphony No. 5, op. 42  
Judy Congdon, organ

Charles-Marie Widor

Junior Class Marshals: Ryan Kullander '27 and Grace Stickels '27  
Piper: Andrew Hutton '18

Following the ceremony, all are invited to join us for lunch on the quad.  
Graduates can meet their professors at the designated reception areas.

# MASTER'S DEGREES

## GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Titus Mika Ahrens, M.B.A.  
Morgan Anderson, M.B.A.  
Jonathan Haines, M.B.A.  
Penny Hansen, M.B.A.  
Caleb Allen Loew, M.B.A.  
Sara Beth Moore, M.B.A.  
Jennifer Page, M.B.A.  
Natalie J. Rivera, M.B.A.  
James Daniel Robinson, M.B.A.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Hannah Case, M.S.Ed.  
Rory Elizabeth Flynn, M.S.Ed.  
Kendra Annaliese Ruth Goodall, M.A.T.  
Jace V. Hunzinger, M.S.Ed.  
Ryan Daniel Zirilli, M.A.T.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Rachel Grace Huchthausen, M.A., M.Mus.  
Jonathan Hutmire, M.A.  
Alexandria Grace Leary, M.Mus.  
Kevin Lee, M.A.

# BACHELOR'S DEGREES

## EDUCATION & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

### EDUCATION

- \* Rethy Joy Armes, B.S.
- \*\* Julianna Bonnett, B.A.  
Jacob L. Carpenter, B.A.◇
- \*\* Emma Cole, B.S.  
Lukas S. C. Cornell, B.S.
- \* Tabitha DeVries, B.S.  
Rachel Doezema, B.S.
- \*\* Hannah Ruth Dunmire, B.S.◇
- \*\*\* Hannah Farley, B.S.
- \*\* Halle Isabelle Karlson, B.S.◇  
Anna Rileigh McNamara, B.A.◇
- \*\* Marissa Ruby Miller, B.S.  
Jillian Powell, B.S.
- \*\* Carter James Sisson, B.A.
- \*\* Raine Cadence Stevens, B.S.
- \*\*\* Lydia Stutz, B.S.
- \*\* Kelsey Marie Thorp, B.A.◇
- \*\* Kanta Ueno, B.A.◇
- \*\* Chesnie Mae-Arlene Waddingham, B.S.
- \* Elizabeth Madison Wertz, B.S.

### PSYCHOLOGY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- \*\* Rachel Grace Bedell, B.A.
- \*\* Tasha M. Bernard, B.A.
- \* Lucas Birt, B.A.  
Isabella Bratton, B.A.
- \*\*\* Clancey Cockle, B.A.  
Jenna Marie Evans, B.A.
- \*\*\* Limat Takele Haile, B.A.
- \*\* Anna Lloyd, B.S.◇  
Emily Mahoney, B.A.  
Blanche Plaskonos, B.S.
- \*\*\* Blake Restivo, B.A.◇  
Jaimie Nicolas Staerkle, B.A.
- \*\* Kareena Nikole Ulfing, B.A.◇
- \* Jesse Voltz, B.S.

- \* Sarah Lynn Weber, B.A.

## GREATBATCH SCHOOL OF MUSIC

- \* Joshua Armstrong, B.Mus.  
Hialeah Hua Bakalik, B.S.
- \*\*\* Susannah Denham, B.S.  
Tyler Reese Dickenson, B.S.  
Emily Rose Hanes, B.S.  
Sarah R. Hoppough, B.Mus.  
Anita B. Johnson, B.A.  
Adrianna Josephine Kappmeier, B.Mus.  
Katrina Brooke Kaufman, B.Mus.  
Rhyan Lorenc, B.Mus.
- \* Riley A. Moffat, B.A.

## MANAGEMENT & CREATIVE ARTS

### ART & DESIGN

- \*\* Evan Babbitt, B.F.A.
- \*\*\* Tessa Rayne DuRand, B.S.
- \*\* Halle Isabelle Karlson, B.S.◇
- \*\* Ephraim Langdon, B.S.
- \*\* Amelia Grace Morrow, B.F.A.
- \* Laura Elizabeth Quisenberry, B.F.A.◇
- \* Jaedyn Brooke Shields, B.F.A.
- \*\* Aivery Faithe Shuck, B.F.A.
- \* Rachael Michelle Smith, B.F.A.

### BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

- Emmalene Christine Amann, B.S.
- \* Logan Baer, B.S.  
Sharon Baugh, B.S.  
Anna Rebekah Cassidy, B.S.◇
- \*\* Anna “Katie” Chappell-Baranska, B.S.  
Jeremey Daniel Everlith Jr., B.S.
- \*\* Allison Griffis, B.S.  
James Hartley Jr., B.B.A.
- \*\* Greta Hewson, B.S.◇

- \* McCabe Kreider, B.S.
- \*\* Crysta A. LaCrosse, B.S.
- \* Vincent Patrick Lucyszyn, B.S.◇
- \*\*\* Thomas George McGlynn, B.S.◇
- \*\*\* Sadie Nakamura, B.S.◇  
Kennedy Obanda Odero, B.S.  
Jonathan Rosario, B.S.  
Elijah T. Sproull, B.S.  
Alicie-Andrea Stewart, B.B.A.  
Anna Marie Carmella Torppey, B.S.  
Donald L. Wright, B.B.A.  
Jared Wright, B.S.
- \* Mara Wutka, B.S.◇

## COMMUNICATION

- \*\* Sydney Evelyn Arnold, B.S.
- \*\* Kyra Binney, B.A.◇
- \*\* Mary Melati Blake, B.A.  
Anna Rebekah Cassidy, B.S.◇
- \*\* Hannah Ruth Dunmire, B.S.◇  
Abigail Rose Engelbert, B.S.
- \*\* Taylor Caroline Pascoe, B.S.◇  
Julia Smith, B.A.  
Katherine Somers, B.S.
- \*\* Kareena Nikole Ulfing, B.A.◇
- \* Sophia Medora Vernon, B.S.
- \* Caleb James Welker, B.S.◇

## SPORT, RECREATION & WELLNESS

- LiAnna Elliott, B.S.
- \*\* Greta Hewson, B.S.◇
- \* Anna Huizenga, B.A.◇  
Ty Kenney, B.S.  
Adelynn Grace Killian, B.S.◇  
Hannah E. Lee, B.S.
- \* Vincent Patrick Lucyszyn, B.S.◇
- \*\*\* Jiana Martin, B.S.  
Kailey Miller, B.S.
- \*\*\* Sadie Nakamura, B.S.◇  
Danielle Nelson, B.S.  
Lauren Onderko, B.S.  
John Rivera Jr., B.S.  
Danielle Elysabeth Skinner, B.S.

Sophia Joy Templeton, B.S.

- \* Caleb James Welker, B.S.◇
- \* Mara Wutka, B.S.◇
- \*\* He Zhang, B.S.

## **NATURAL SCIENCES & MATHEMATICS**

### **BIOLOGY**

- Benjamin Allen, B.S.
- \* Elijah Baciуска, B.S.
- \*\* Amos Dean Bixler, B.S.
- \*\* Tricia Carmer, B.S.
- Ty Marcos Cooley, B.A.
- \*\* Katherine Grace Corbeill, B.S.
- \*\*\* Emma Makena Dainty, B.A.◇
- Kara W. Dawson, B.S.
- Christopher Albert Gross, B.S.
- \*\*\* Samuel C. J. Ioset, B.S.
- Adelynn Grace Killian, B.S.◇
- Mark Lewandowski, B.S.
- \*\*\* Noelle Marie Linenfelser, B.S.
- Angelina Gail Miller, B.S.
- Reuben Noronha, B.S.
- \*\* Daniele Schivo, B.S.
- Christian Tortorici, B.S.

### **CHEMISTRY & BIOCHEMISTRY**

- \* Annika Grace Galen, B.S.
- \*\* Owen Chun-Lok Lai, B.S.
- Anna Rileigh McNamara, B.A.◇
- Dhani Slaughter, B.S.
- \* Aiden Talcott, B.S.

### **MATHEMATICS**

- \*\* Andrew Bo, B.S.◇
- \* Samara Rose Hallett, B.A.
- \* Laura Elizabeth Quisenberry, B.A.◇
- \*\* Kelsey Marie Thorp, B.A.◇
- \*\*\* Warren Peter Torraca, B.A.

## **PHYSICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING**

- \* Conner Benitez, B.S.
- \*\* Andrew Bo, B.S.◇
- Samuel Franklin Figard, B.S.
- \*\* Isaac John Gasparri, B.S.
- \*\* Ashleigh Gossman, B.S.
- Asher Robson Knight, B.S.
- Joshua Allen Swanson, B.S.
- Nathan Tyler, B.S.
- Eric Waterhouse, B.S.

## **RELIGION, HUMANITIES & GLOBAL STUDIES**

### **BIBLE & THEOLOGY**

- \*\* Lee James, B.A.◇
- Julien C. Littleton, B.A.
- Michael McCutcheon, B.A.

### **ENGLISH & WRITING**

- \*\* Abigail Bates, B.A.◇
- \*\* Kyra Binney, B.A.◇
- Amy Buttles, B.A.
- \*\*\* Emma Makena Dainty, B.A.◇
- \*\*\* Makayla Johnson, B.A.
- \* Isabella Grace Jones, B.A.
- \*\* Taylor Caroline Pascoe, B.S.◇
- \*\*\* Blake Restivo, B.A.◇
- \*\* Kanta Ueno, B.A.◇

## **HISTORY, POLITICS & PHILOSOPHY, AND GLOBAL STUDIES**

- Alianna Faith Barnes, B.A.
- \*\* Abigail Bates, B.A.◇
- Jacob L. Carpenter, B.A.◇
- \* Julia E. Collins, B.A.
- Jack Conant, B.A.
- \*\*\* Arija Lord Grant, B.A.
- Caleb Everett Readett Holscher, B.A.

- \* Anna Huizenga, B.A.◇
- \*\* Lee James, B.A.◇
- \* Julia Joy Lindo, B.A.
- \*\* Anna Lloyd, B.S.◇
- Ethan Parks, B.A.
- André Johan van Arragon Spronk, B.A.
- Kalli Starkey, B.A.
- Anna Christy Zimmerman, B.A.

## ASSOCIATE DEGREES

- Molly Kate Beckenhaupt, A.A.
- Kip Bertram, A.A.
- Charles Covington III, A.A.
- Summer Cunningham, A.A.
- Meghan Deeter, A.A.
- Salim Ford, A.A.
- Chelsea Ruth Hammond, A.S.
- Kathryn Elizabeth Hatch, A.A.
- Sofia Riquelme, A.A.
- Abigail Ruth Shade, A.A.
- Robin C. Williams, A.S.

## SYMBOL KEY

◇ Students with multiple majors. When majors are in different departments, the student's name appears in each department.

\* *cum laude* 3.5 – 3.69  
(white cords)

\*\* *magna cum laude* 3.7 – 3.89  
(purple cords)

\*\*\* *summa cum laude* 3.9 – 4.0  
(gold cords)

Valedictorian / Salutatorian – gold stole

Latin Honors are computed based on cumulative grade point average at the end of the fall semester as verified on March 6, and are subject to change pending completion of degree requirements.

**Listing of student's name does not guarantee degree completion.**

# SENIOR HONORS AND RESEARCH

## VALEDICTORIAN

Noelle Marie Linenfelser

## SALUTATORIAN

Emma Makena Dainty

## SENIOR HONORS RESEARCH

Rachel Grace Bedell

Senior Honors in Psychology

Committee Chair: Alison Young Reusser '07

Title: *Deep Fake AI and the Uncanny Valley*

Limat Takele Haile

Senior Honors in Psychology

Committee Chair: Alison Young Reusser '07

Title: *Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Its Relationship Across Individualist and Collectivist Cultures*

# HONOR SOCIETIES

## PSI CHI – PSYCHOLOGY

Psi Chi is an international honor society whose purpose shall be to encourage, stimulate, and maintain excellence in scholarship of the individual members in all fields, particularly in psychology, and to advance the science of psychology.

Rachel Grace Bedell

Tasha M. Bernard

Clancey Cockle

Arija Lord Grant

Limat Takele Haile

Chelsea Ruth Hammond

Anna Lloyd

Emily Jane Mahoney

Aivery Faithe Shuck

Kareena Nikole Ulfig

Jesse Voltz



## PI KAPPA LAMBDA – MUSIC

The primary objective of Pi Kappa Lambda is the recognition and encouragement of the highest level of musical achievement and academic scholarship. The Society is convinced that recognizing and honoring persons who have enhanced their talents by serious, diligent, and intelligent study will stimulate others to do the same.

Joshua Armstrong  
Susannah Denham  
Jonathan Hutmire  
Alexandria Grace Leary



## SIGMA ZETA – MATHEMATICS/SCIENCES

Sigma Zeta is a national undergraduate honor society to encourage and foster scholarly activity and recognize academic scholarship in the natural and computer sciences and mathematics.

Elijah Baciuska  
Andrew Bo  
Tricia Carmer  
Katherine Grace Corbeill  
Kara W. Dawson  
Annika Grace Galen  
Ashleigh Gossman  
Samuel C. J. Ioset  
Asher Robson Knight  
Dhani Slaughter



# COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

*Carrie J. Whitcher, MHA*

Carrie Whitcher is the Chief Quality Officer at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Insurance Services Division. She oversees the operations and strategies for the Health Plan's quality performance and community engagement programs, including coordination and integration of clinical quality, member experience, and community-driven efforts across all lines of business. She also has direct oversight of quality rating programs and requirements, accreditation/regulatory activities, program development and innovation, provider performance programs, member complaints and grievances, and quality analytics.

Carrie brings over 25 years of leadership experience in quality improvement in both payer and provider settings. She brings expertise in health care quality improvement and administrative strategy and execution. She is an action-oriented leader who is passionate about improving health care structures and processes to maximize patient outcomes, dedicated to advancing organization-wide culture through matrix collaboration, communication, and team development strategies, and driven to achieve results through innovative strategies and programs. Prior to joining UPMC Health Plan, she served as the Vice President of Health Care Improvement at Excellus BCBS (d/b/a Univera Healthcare) based in Rochester, New York, leading the corporate-wide quality strategy across all lines of business.

Carrie earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Services Administration from the State University of New York College at Fredonia and a Master's degree in Health Services Administration from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has been recognized for her strong leadership at both local and national levels. In 2018, she was honored with Diversity Journal's Women Worth Watching Award: Executives Leading the Way to Excellence in the Workplace, Marketplace, and the World. She has volunteered in a multitude of settings over the years, most recently with The Wesleyan Church, leading the national Marketplace Multiplier movement as their team leader of strategy. She is a 2024 graduate of Leadership Pittsburgh Inc, LP XL and serves on boards of directors in the Pittsburgh community.

Carrie and her husband, Matthew, reside in Pittsburgh and have two children.

# HONOREES

## **Johanna Chacón Rugh, Houghton Medal**

Rev. Johanna Rugh serves The Wesleyan Church as the Executive Director of Education and Clergy Development. Under Rev. Rugh's leadership, The Wesleyan Church remains committed to empowering students, clergy, and churches to be effective ministers of the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ. Her leadership is marked by a strong commitment to develop Wesleyan clergy and to guide educational institutions to thrive.

## **Paul Young '76, Houghton Medal**

Dr. Paul Young is an esteemed professor emeritus of psychology at Houghton University. In his many years at Houghton, Dr. Young, a scholar and lover of learning, embodied the scholar-servant ideal as an expert on physiological psychology—on topics involving brain anatomy and the effects of drugs on human behavior—as he served his students and mentored generations of new faculty. He also has an abiding passion for Bible study and has offered one of the longest-running Sunday school classes at the Houghton Wesleyan Church.

## **David Cram, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa***

David Cram is a distinguished financial leader with over three decades of service at Wycliffe Bible Translators and SIL International, notably as Corporate Treasurer and CFO. An award-winning CPA, he specialized in global internal auditing and nonprofit governance, including leadership roles with Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and Missio Nexus. Currently, he serves on several boards, including the Deaf Bible Society, leveraging his extensive expertise in auditing and stewardship to support international ministry efforts and ensure rigorous financial accountability throughout global missions.

## **Robert Danner, Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa***

To generations of alumni, Dr. Robert F. Danner is affectionately known as “Dean Danner.” A decorated Vietnam veteran and former West Point admissions director with degrees from Wheaton and George Washington, he brought a disciplined yet compassionate servant's heart to Houghton University. For over twenty years, Dean Danner championed the scholar-servant ideal, tirelessly nurturing the spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth of every student. Whether performing on his tuba or sharing a quiet moment of mentorship, his legacy of warmth and Christ-centered leadership remains the vibrant heartbeat of our community. Dean Danner is the living embodiment of our mission's deepest values.

# HOUGHTON LEADERSHIP

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Gary Bahler '73  
Joanne Barnes  
Debra Canfield '76  
James Eckert '88  
Benjamin Espinoza  
Karen Fohl '95  
W. Mike Gaffney, Jr. '94  
John Gillette, Jr. '76  
Doris Griffin  
Omar Haedo '87  
Joseph Jennings '86  
Ray Kaltenbaugh '73  
Ralph Kerr  
Kevin Knowlton '79  
John Lee  
Wayne D. Lewis, Jr.

J. Anthony Lloyd '79  
Gregory McClain  
Harriett Olson '80  
Matthew Pickering '93  
Johanna Rugh  
Terry Slye '79  
Harold Spooner '74  
Joy Tolliver  
Coreena Weaver '84  
Aimee Wuethrich '89

## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CABINET

Greg Bish '95  
Bill Burrichter '92  
Natasha Davis  
Jill (Brautigam '99) Jordan  
Wayne D. Lewis, Jr.

Karl Sisson  
Jason Towers '97  
Matthew Webb  
Dale Wright '84

## PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY BOARD

Reginald Burt  
Adam Compton '89  
Melissa Fisher '90  
Ryan Ozzello '21  
Rosario "Roz" Picardo '03  
Jeffrey Prinsell '75

Gordon "Don" Purdy '89  
James Rogan II '83  
Stephen Sawada  
Jeffrey Thompson '01  
Robert Van Dyk '75  
Rick Vienne '84

# HOUGHTON HISTORY

The institution was established in 1883 as a seminary (high school) under the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. Coeducational from its founding, Houghton operated as a secondary school for its first 15 years. The institution has been committed from its conception to making a high-quality, deeply Christian education available to those who would not otherwise have this kind of opportunity.

The commitment is grounded in the conviction that God has gifted each individual in ways that ought to be developed for the purpose of more effectively participating in God's redemptive purposes throughout our world. Thus, affordability, accessibility and global engagement—as well as high quality academics and deeply Christian faith—have been consistent trademarks of a Houghton education throughout our history.

Beginning in 1899, a few college classes were offered, which were sufficient to allow the college department's first diploma to be awarded in 1901. Early principals of the school were Wesleyan Methodist pastors willing to accept the job. In 1908, Houghton acquired its first academically trained president, James S. Luckey, who served until his death in 1937. President Luckey believed that if Houghton College was to have the impact that God intended, it needed to be recognized within the larger world of American higher education. Thanks in large part to President Luckey's persistent efforts, Houghton College received its provisional charter from New York State in 1923 and awarded its first 19 baccalaureate degrees two years later. A permanent charter was granted in 1927, followed by full accreditation by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges in 1935.

The Buffalo Bible Institute in West Seneca merged with Houghton College in 1969, serving as a hub for diverse academic programs for several decades. Through the strategic establishment of teaching sites and the 1997 launch of its online presence, Houghton has consistently expanded its reach. These initiatives reflect the institution's commitment to providing a rigorous, Christ-centered education to learners of all ages who might otherwise lack access to such opportunities.

In 2022, the University of the State of New York Board of Regents approved the name change and updated the charter for the institution to become Houghton University. Today, Houghton University offers multiple avenues for individuals to access a Christ-centered higher education. Throughout its history, Houghton has affirmed that an education grounded in a deep sense of our identity as God's children and a commitment to excellence in critical thinking, communication and community formation is the very best preparation for a lifetime of effectiveness and impact in the ever-changing circumstances of our 21st-century world.